

I am convinced that if we are to effectively reduce teenage childbearing, we must do more to raise the awareness level of this issue in our communities and actively engage our youth. Our youth have ideas, opinions and can provide leadership in our efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy.

Since the early 1990s, teen pregnancy and birth rates have steadily declined. As a nation, we deserve to be proud of the progress we have made. Yet, despite these impressive gains, 4 out of 10 girls in this country still get pregnant at least once by age 20—nearly 1 million adolescent pregnancies each year. Also, in eastern North Carolina, the rate has not gone down at the same time as the Nation, several counties in my district are among the highest in the State. In other words, we have a long way to go.

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. This is the most opportune time for all of us to redouble our efforts in convincing young people that adolescence must be a time for continued positive growth in the areas of education. It is the growing up and having fun stage for youth, not the time to dwell on pregnancy and parenthood. I was happy to recently help the private, nonprofit National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy release two new important reports (including a large nationally representative survey of adults and teens) that should provide comfort to parents and schools while challenging.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the survey released by the National Campaign clearly shows that the American public has a very common sense view of the teen pregnancy problem despite the often-extreme rhetoric that surrounds the issue. The overwhelming majority of adults and teens believe that teens should not be sexually active but those who are should have access to contraception. The survey also reveals, however, that the public does not view abstinence and contraceptive use as equally attractive options. A clear national consensus exists that school-age teens should not have sex—more than nine of ten adults (95 percent) and teens (93 percent) said it is important that teens be given a strong abstinence message from society.

The consensus position seems to recognize that the continued debate over abstinence versus contraception is counter-productive and misses the more critical issue of motivation. Teens will do neither unless they are highly motivated to avoid pregnancy in the first place.

Parents who feel that they have lost their children to the influence of peers and popular culture should note that teens say their parents influence their sexual decisionmaking more than any other source. Parents, on the other hand, believe that peers wield the greatest influence on these matters. This generational divide must be bridged. Parents need to know that their children really do want to hear from them about sex, love, and relationships, even if they don't always seem like it.

Schools are also clearly part of the solution to teen pregnancy. When asked where they have learned the most about preventing teen pregnancy, more teens said teachers and sex educators than other sources. Once again, however, both adults and teens take a common sense view of how much of the sex education burden schools should shoulder. Nine out of ten adults disagree that sex education is primarily the responsibility of schools and

few adults or teens believe that schools are responsible for fixing the problem of teen pregnancy.

So what should be done? What do these findings and others from the National Campaign suggest? Here are some simple recommendations for continued progress in preventing teen pregnancy:

Abstinence should be strongly stressed as the best choice for teens because of its effectiveness and its consistency with the beliefs of adults and teens. But giving teens information about—and access to—contraception is still important.

Arguments over which strategy is better—sexual abstinence or contraceptive use—are recipes for stalemate. More of both are needed. In a diverse country, a number of difference approaches to preventing teen pregnancy is absolutely essential.

Parents can do much more to help. Kids want to hear from their parents about sex and values but often do not.

Effective programs to reduce teen pregnancy should be expanded, but it is unrealistic to assume that community programs alone will solve this problem.

The good news about declining rates of teen pregnancy and birth is that progress on this seemingly intractable social problem is possible.

I was delighted by the comments and suggestions made by youth during my recent visit to neighborhood schools. Youth are concerned about the lack of productive after school activities. Youth leaders would like to become more active in prevention activities with other youth, and would like to know that contraceptives are provided hassle free.

I believe that devoting more energy resources and funding to prevention teen pregnancy would not only improve the health, education, and economic opportunities of our Nation's youth, but it would save money in the long run.

We cannot overestimate the far-reaching effects of teen pregnancy. We must continue to pursue ways to develop pregnancy prevention programs that educate and support high-risk youth and their families through comprehensive social and health services.

Young people who believe that they have real futures to risk, have real incentives to delay parenting. That is why when we demand responsible behavior we have reciprocal obligation to offer a real future beyond early parenting and poverty.

I strongly support abstinence education and feel that abstinence programs are critically important for pre-teens as well as teens; we, however, cannot ignore the fact that so many of our teens are already sexually active. Therefore it is important that teens hear both messages, abstinence and contraception. Good, factual information is empowering to our youth, especially with guidance from their parents. I encourage each community to help determine how best to address this critical issue.

TRIBUTE TO GLADYS HARRINGTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to

what I consider a great American lady, a woman who has witnessed firsthand World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the invention of television, the microwave, and the World Wide Web.

On May 29, Gladys Harrington, who is a real friend of mine, a true pillar of the Plano, Texas community, is celebrating her 100th birthday.

She has lived an abundant life. She moved to Plano in the early 1900s when 1,500 people lived there. Today, Plano is home to 230,000 plus and growing.

She married Fred Harrington in 1919 in Plano, Texas and gave birth to two sons, Joe Harrington and Conner Harrington. Conner Harrington actually ran for Congress against a Democrat icon, Sam Rayburn, who was a friend of mine as well. She is the proud grandma of four children, Connie, Cynthia, Mary Lou, and Freddy, as well as two great grandchildren, Sage and Emily.

It is obvious that she has touched the lives of those around her and blessed everyone with her passion for life and zest for service. As a member of the First Christian Church, she taught Sunday school, led the Christian Women Fellowship and served as a deaconess.

In addition, they helped found what is now the Gladys Harrington Library in Plano. What started as a one-room temporary facility has now blossomed into one of the leading libraries in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I may not even be standing here today were it not for the hard work and selfless dedication of my dear friend Gladys. I say that because Gladys helped me run my first campaign for Congress in 1991 and every time thereafter.

Every Republican knows that one cannot do anything Republican in Texas without Gladys Harrington. She has volunteered countless hours of her time and dollars to help the party rise to the best that it is today. Think about it. Every Statewide office in Texas is now Republican. The Texan in the White House is even a Republican, too; and Gladys helped him as well.

Gladys helped lay the essential groundwork for the grassroots efforts for this amazing fete. She has mobilized ground troops, attended conventions, paid her dues and then some.

In addition to giving her time to the Republican Party, she gives so much to those around her. In fact, she continues to go to a book club and to the Plano Chamber Orchestra. She keeps scrapbooking, detailing the many years behind her and saving room for more to come.

I think America needs more good people like Gladys Harrington. She is a great American in my view, and I am proud to know her. I just want to wish Gladys a happy birthday. Plano would not be the same without Gladys.